March 15, 2016

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies
2362-A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6016

The Honorable Sam Farr
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6016

Dear Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member Farr:

As you consider the fiscal year 2017 Agriculture Appropriations bill, we write to express our strong support for funding Rural Utility Service (RUS) Electric Loans at the same level as last year, a level lower than requested by the President.

Consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives generate less than five percent of the nation’s electric power but maintain nearly half the nation’s electric distribution lines. Electric cooperatives’ distribution systems cover 75 percent of this country’s land mass while serving 12 percent of American electric consumers. Electric cooperatives use RUS Electric Loans to finance electricity generation and distribution and provide affordable, reliable electric service to approximately 42 million people every day.

As you know, these loans are repaid with interest and have an extraordinary track record of repayment. RUS Electric Loans also contribute to deficit reduction. In fiscal year 2017 alone, electric loan repayments will net nearly $300 million to the U.S. Treasury.

The President’s Budget recommends that the total loan amount be directed toward specific purposes. Instead, we suggest RUS lending continue to be driven by the needs of the borrower rather than the type of project proposed. This flexibility will help meet the diverse challenges of RUS electric borrowers and ensure loans are available whether the
project is for environmental upgrades to current generation, the construction of renewable or natural gas generation, or the development of new baseload generation.

Lowering the U.S. deficit and keeping consumer co-op electric bills affordable are mutually beneficial goals we can all support. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Michael Conaway
Member of Congress

Collin Peterson
Member of Congress

Rick Crawford
Member of Congress

Gerald Connolly
Member of Congress

Trent Franks
Member of Congress

David Scott
Member of Congress

Corrine Brown
Member of Congress

Doug Lamborn
Member of Congress

Walter Jones
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Doug Collins
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Member of Congress

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French Hill  
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Phil Roe  
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G.K. Butterfield
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Sanford Bishop
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Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

Doug LaMalfa  
Member of Congress

Joyce Beatty  
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

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Ryan Zinke  
Member of Congress

Andy Barr  
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

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Randy Neugebauer  
Member of Congress
Lloyd Doggett  
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Luke Messer  
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Doug Lamborn  
Member of Congress  

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Member of Congress  

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Eliot Engel  
Member of Congress  

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Frank Lucas  
Member of Congress  

Randy Weber  
Member of Congress  

Adam Kinzinger  
Member of Congress  

Roger Williams  
Member of Congress  

Mark Takai  
Member of Congress
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Chris Gibson
Member of Congress

Elizabeth H. Esty
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Martha McSally
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Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress

Jared Huffman
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Bill Pascrell, Jr.
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Wm. Lacy Clay
Member of Congress

Richard Hudson
Member of Congress

Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress

Bill Flores
Member of Congress
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Susan Brooks
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Ann McLane Kuster
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Pete Aguilar
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Steve Stivers
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